



SUMMER • 2004

Veterans' Health

THE WELLNESS MAGAZINE
FOR OHIO VETERANS

Kick the
smoking habit
VA wants you to quit

Helping you
spot and stop a
heart attack





To our readers

As the summer season falls upon us, we continue to work hard to help keep you healthy and fit. This issue covers important health topics that may benefit you or someone you love. On pages 4–5, learn how VA programs can help you stop smoking and ensure a healthier future. On pages 6–7, find out how our latest initiative can help you get the facts about heart disease and save your life in the event that you suffer a heart attack.

We also remind you on page 3 about online resources we offer, such as **MyHealthVet**, plus other ways we can help you understand and treat common health problems facing older adults. Best wishes for a safe and healthy summer!

—Clyde Parkis, Network Director



About our mailing list

We make every effort to ensure our mailing lists are accurate.

If you have questions or would like to be added to or deleted from the list, let us know. Please include your entire address. To make a change, you *must* mail the mailing panel to:

Veterans' Health

VA Healthcare System of Ohio
Network Office

11500 Northlake Drive, Suite 200
Cincinnati, OH 45249

Veterans' Health is back online at www.va.gov/visn10/. Visit this site to view back issues or subscribe.

Serving veterans with quality care

When you visit your VA medical center, it's good to know you're getting quality healthcare that adheres to the highest national standards. With that in mind, we've invited the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) to evaluate our facilities in VA Healthcare System of Ohio. JCAHO is an independent, not-for-profit agency that evaluates about 80 percent of all hospitals in the United States every three years. JCAHO awards accreditation to hospitals that pass its standards.

What does the JCAHO seal of approval mean for you? It means that your medical center complies with state-of-the-art standards while offering services needed to diagnose and treat illnesses in a safe environment.

Patient assessments, medication use, operating procedures, patient rights, staff qualifications and infection control are just some of the performance areas that JCAHO will be evaluating. JCAHO will begin conducting on-site surveys at VA Healthcare System of Ohio this summer. **VH**



Veteran patient expresses thanks to VA

The Department of Veterans Affairs received a letter of appreciation from Richard E. Moore, a Vietnam veteran and Purple Heart recipient, who praised the quality care he received at the VA facility in Lawrenceburg, Ind. Below is an excerpt from his letter:

"Dr. Leslie Long is one of the best doctors I have ever been to, and I have seen a lot of doctors throughout my life. Her patients and VA are extremely blessed to have her as their physician."

Veterans' Health is published quarterly as a patient education service by VA Healthcare System of Ohio, one of the 21 integrated networks of the Department of Veterans Affairs. The publication is intended to provide information to help you stay well, manage your healthcare and learn about the many health services available through VA. This publication is not intended as a substitute for professional medical advice, which should be obtained from your doctor. All articles may be reproduced for educational purposes.

The Mission of VA Healthcare System of Ohio is:

- To provide veterans a continuum of care that is accessible, value-added and cost-effective, and of the highest quality, within an environment of outstanding education and research.
- To promote a culture that supports and develops a caring, compassionate, competent and quality-oriented workforce.

Veterans' Health Editorial Directors

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Get moving to get healthy

At VA Healthcare System of Ohio, we're always finding ways to help you get healthy and fit.

"An easy and terrific step to better your health is to start walking," says David Van Winkle, Ph.D., director of the VISN 10 Rehabilitation Care Line. Try Volksmarches, he suggests, referring to fun group walks held regularly throughout Ohio. Visit www.ava.org to learn where the next Volksmarch will take place.

"Also schedule regular checkups with your VA healthcare provider to find out your risk factors for disease," says Dr. Van Winkle, who supervises risk reduction clinics at Dayton VA Medical Center. If necessary, your provider will refer you to a clinic or program in your area, where trained staff will suggest an exercise and nutrition plan that's right for you. **VH**



Becoming wiser about healthy living



A reminder to vets: Get your complimentary copy of the *Healthwise® for Life* self-help manual full of the latest medical information to help you

make the best healthcare decisions. If you haven't yet received your copy of the book, you will at your next primary care appointment.

All veterans have Internet access to the Healthwise Knowledgebase, your accredited online resource that features the most current information on diseases, conditions, tests and other health and wellness topics. Visit www.va.gov/visn10/ and click on

Healthwise to access the site.

Both resources complement VA Healthcare System of Ohio's total healthcare package aimed at getting and keeping you well. **VH**

How to access My HealthVet online



Haven't visited the **My HealthVet** website yet?

Staying healthy and informed about your well-being is just a few mouse clicks away. Follow these simple steps to register:

1. Go to **www.myhealth.va.gov**.
2. Click **Register now**.
3. Create and enter a **User name**.
4. Create and enter a **Password**.
5. Retype and **Confirm password**.

6. Select a **Password hint** and enter an **Answer**.
7. Enter your **First name**.
8. Enter your **Last name**.
9. Enter your **Zip code**.
10. Enter your **E-mail address**.
11. Check the appropriate box in the **I am a** section.
12. Check the **Terms and conditions** box.
13. Check the **Privacy policy** box.
14. Click **Submit**.



Kick the smoking habit

VA wants you to quit

You probably don't need the Surgeon General's warnings to be convinced: Smoking kills. For this reason, VA has made a nationwide commitment to help veterans—whose smoking rates are slightly higher than others—kick the habit.

If you smoke, you know how tough quitting can be. "Nicotine creates severe changes in the brain and body over time, which makes quitting hard," says Robert M. Anthenelli, M.D., director of the Substance Dependence Program at Cleveland VA Campus. "Fewer than 5 percent of smokers who try on their own

to quit 'cold turkey' succeed. And heavier smokers struggle more than lighter smokers."

Don't go it alone

During your next checkup, your VA healthcare provider will ask if you smoke and, if so, if you'd like help quitting. "It's one of the steps VA is taking to get smokers to think about quitting and to offer help to those who want or have tried to quit," Dr. Anthenelli says.

Dr. Anthenelli's advice to smoking vets: Take the twofold approach offered through VA



to help you fend off the urge to smoke: (1) short-term medication and (2) behavioral counseling. “More than 20 to 30 percent of people who take medication and get counseling successfully quit,” says Dr. Anthenelli, who also directs the Tri-State Tobacco and Alcohol Research Center (TRI-TARC). Veterans and their families can enroll in clinical trials that TRI-TARC is conducting on smoking cessation. Call **513-475-OHIO** for more information.

Any VA healthcare provider can prescribe medications that relieve withdrawal symptoms such as anxiety, depression, irritability and sleeping problems. Nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) helps

ease you off cigarettes by dispensing small doses of nicotine through chewing gums, patches or prescription nasal sprays or inhalers. NRT may be used alone or with the prescription medication bupropion. Patients normally taper off medication within a 12-week period.

Weekly group sessions boost your motivation and teach you how to use medication properly. The sessions reinforce the rewards of quitting, including:

- a decreased risk of heart attack, stroke and cancer

- a healthier environment for family and friends
- more money to spend on things you enjoy

Counselors help you recognize the triggers that make you light up, such as drinking coffee after meals, and offer coping techniques to combat triggers.

If you’ve made smokeless tobacco—snuff or chewing tobacco—your habit, the same therapies can help. “Nicotine in any form is addictive,” says Dr. Anthenelli. “Smokeless tobacco puts you at increased risk for cancers of the mouth, tongue and throat.” If you’re fighting other addictions like drugs or alcohol, kicking the nicotine habit is still important, stresses Dr. Anthenelli. For patients with multiple addictions, VA Healthcare System of Ohio offers special programs such as Clean Break in Cincinnati.

Try, try again

If you’ve tried to quit and failed, don’t give up: You can still reap major health benefits when you succeed. Many people make several attempts to quit smoking before they’re able to kick the nicotine habit for good. Even if you’ve been smoking for

many years, giving up cigarettes pays almost immediate health rewards.

“Smoking is associated with 430,000 deaths each year in the United States—that’s about 20 percent of all deaths. If you’re a smoker, there’s nothing better you can do for your health than quit,” Dr. Anthenelli says.

To learn more about tobacco-free

health benefits, refer to pages 19–21 in your *Healthwise® for Life* book. If you smoke, talk to your VA healthcare provider about a smoking cessation program that meets your needs. **VH**

**Talking to
your VA healthcare
provider about the
right combination of
medication and counseling
can help you enjoy a
smoke-free life.**



Helping you spot and stop a heart attack

If you think you're experiencing heart attack symptoms, what do you do?

(A) Wait to see if the symptoms subside.

(B) Hop in the car and drive to a VA medical center.

(C) Call your doctor.

(D) Call 911 *fast*.

The correct answer is (D) Call 911 *fast*.

Every second counts when you're having a heart attack, and emergency medical services has the training and equipment to give you lifesaving first aid on the spot. Plus, you'll get to the hospital faster and get quicker treatment if you go by ambulance.

VA Healthcare System of Ohio takes an active role in caring for your heart health and joins in VA's nationwide educational campaign, "Time Is Life for Heart Attack." Our facilities display posters, run videos and distribute brochures to help you reduce your risk of heart disease and form a plan in case you suffer a heart attack. These lifesaving tools include:

- a list of heart attack warning signs
- instructions about what to do if you experience heart attack symptoms
- a checklist to help you identify your risk factors for heart disease
- fill-in-the-blank forms and wallet cards to document your medications and instructions

from your VA healthcare provider to hospital and emergency medical staff

The right treatment can save your life

"Often, veterans are misinformed about what to do if they experience a heart attack. Some think they can only be treated at a VA hospital or clinic," says Jose Ortiz, M.D., director of the Cardiac Intensive Care Unit at Cleveland VA Medical Center and leader of VA Healthcare System of Ohio's effort to educate patients and

healthcare providers about preventing, recognizing and treating heart disease. "But veterans can go to any hospital if they experience any heart attack signs.

"Some veterans also underestimate the significance of chest pain and may wait until the next day to see a doctor. Or, they'll drive themselves to a hospital,



Posters displayed in VA facilities help you recognize heart attack signs so you can take fast action.

Are you having a heart attack?

Call 911 immediately if you experience any of the following:

- uncomfortable pressure, fullness, squeezing or pain anywhere in the chest lasting more than a few minutes
- pain that spreads to one or both arms or to the shoulders, neck, stomach or back
- chest discomfort with light-headedness, fainting, sweating, nausea, vomiting or shortness of breath
- upper abdominal pain with shortness of breath, fatigue or nausea (more common in women)
- chest discomfort with a feeling of doom or imminent death



which they should never do,” Dr. Ortiz adds.

VA Healthcare System of Ohio offers fast, advanced cardiac treatment. Dr. Ortiz supervises equipment upgrades and makes sure healthcare providers have the latest technology to diagnose heart problems quickly and provide the best treatment. Plans are underway for Cleveland and Cincinnati to offer two new, first-rate cardiac catheterization labs. During catheterization, cardiologists insert a thin tube through a vein and into the heart to diagnose or treat heart conditions.

Healthy steps can extend your future

To avoid heart disease, exercise regularly, eat a healthy diet and work with your VA healthcare provider to monitor your blood sugar, cholesterol and blood pressure. If you smoke, ask your VA healthcare provider about a program to help you stop (*see pages 4–5*).

Take advantage of our “Time Is Life for Heart Attack” materials to help protect your heart health. Also consult your *Healthwise® for Life* book on pages 53–54 for tips on recognizing a heart attack. **VH**

Reaching Us Is Easy

Keep this information handy—when you need us, we'll be there.

MEDICAL CENTERS

Brecksville VA Campus

10000 Brecksville Road
Brecksville, OH 44141
440-526-3030

Chillicothe VA Campus

17273 State Route 104
Chillicothe, OH 45601
740-773-1141

Cincinnati VA Campus

3200 Vine Street
Cincinnati, OH 45220
513-861-3100

Dayton VA Campus

4100 West Third Street
Dayton, OH 45428
937-268-6511

Ft. Thomas VA Campus

1000 So. Ft. Thomas Avenue
Ft. Thomas, KY 41075
859-572-6202

Louis Stokes Wade Park VA Campus

10701 East Boulevard
Cleveland, OH 44106
216-791-3800

INDEPENDENT OUTPATIENT CLINIC

Chalmers P. Wylie VA Campus

543 Taylor Avenue
Columbus, OH 43203
614-257-5200

COMMUNITY-BASED OUTPATIENT CLINICS

Akron VA Campus

55 West Waterloo
Akron, OH 44319
330-724-7715

Athens VA Campus

510 West Union Street
Athens, OH 45701
740-593-7314

Bellevue VA Campus

103 Landmark Drive
Bellevue, KY 41073
859-392-3840

Canton VA Campus

733 Market Avenue South
Canton, OH 44702
330-489-4600

Clermont County VA Campus

Eastgate Professional
Office Park
4355 Ferguson Drive, Suite 270
Cincinnati, OH 45245
513-943-3680

Dearborn Co. VA Campus

710 W. Eads Parkway
Lawrenceburg, IN 47025
812-539-2313

East Liverpool VA Campus

332 West 6th Street
East Liverpool, OH 43920
330-386-4303

Grove City VA Campus

1953 Ohio Avenue
Grove City, OH 43123
614-257-5800

Lancaster VA Campus

1550 Sheridan Drive, Suite 100
Colonnade Medical Building
Lancaster, OH 43130
740-653-6145

Lima VA Campus

1303 Bellefontaine Avenue
Lima, OH 45804
419-222-5788

Lorain VA Campus

205 West 20th Street
Lorain, OH 44052
440-244-3833

Mansfield VA Campus

1456 Park Avenue West
Mansfield, OH 44906
419-529-4602

Marietta VA Campus

418 Colegate Drive
Marietta, OH 45750
740-568-0412

McCafferty VA Campus

4242 Lorain Avenue
Cleveland, OH 44113
216-939-0699

Middletown VA Campus

675 North University Boulevard
Middletown, OH 45042
513-423-8387

Painesville VA Campus

7 West Jackson Street
Painesville, OH 44077
440-357-6740

Portsmouth VA Campus

621 Broadway Street
Portsmouth, OH 45662
740-353-3236

Richmond VA Campus

4351 South A Street
Richmond, IN 47374
765-973-6915

Sandusky VA Campus

3416 Columbus Avenue
Sandusky, OH 44870
419-625-7350

Springfield VA Campus

512 South Burnett Road
Springfield, OH 45505
937-328-3385

Warren VA Campus

Riverside Square
1400 Tod Avenue NW
Warren, OH 44485
330-392-0311

Youngstown VA Campus

2031 Belmont Avenue
Youngstown, OH 44505
330-740-9200

Zanesville VA Campus

840 Bethesda Drive
Building 3A
Zanesville, OH 43701
740-453-7725

Call Tele-Nurse at 1-888-838-6446. • Visit us online at www.va.gov/visn10/.

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